

Introducing *Mortified* the Series

Program:	Mortified
Year Level:	Year 4 to Year 8
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; The Arts (Media); Humanities; Health and Physical Education (Personal Development)
Themes/Topics:	Adolescence; Families; Self and Relationships; Genre; Change; Growth and Development; Narrative Structure; Film Language; Humour and Satire; Stereotypes
Description:	This sequence of learning experiences draws upon <i>Mortified</i> , Episode 1 to introduce the series, central characters and key themes.
Resources:	Episode 1: Taylor's DNA Worksheet 1: Mortified Scale

Lesson plan:

1.1 Tuning In

Provide students with a booklet or stapled pages to use as a journal. Have them create a front page that responds to the question: Who am I? Encourage students to draw a self-portrait, to add photos of themselves and to draw images and symbols of things that are important to them.

Prior to viewing the opening sequence of *Mortified*, **Episode 1, Taylor's DNA**, develop a set of questions with the class to focus attention on identifying key characters, key theme/s of the series and possible storylines, for example,

- What information do you gain from the soundtrack? Listen to the lyrics (words) of any songs and think about the type of music you hear on the soundtrack. Listen also to any dialogue.
- What information do you gain from what you see on the screen? Think about information related to the series title, the producers of the series, names of characters and actors. How is information conveyed? (e.g. live action footage, visual effects, animation, text on screen)
- Who are the characters? What do they look and sound like?
- Who do you think will be the main character? How do you know?
- What do you find out about the personalities of characters?
- What do you discover about where the series is set?
- Who do you think is the target audience?

As a class, discuss the meaning of the word 'mortified'. Consult several print and online resources to develop a list of definitions and similes. Consider who might be 'mortified' in this series and list any predictions.

Clip 1: Episode 1, *Knowing Who You Are*

Students could work with a partner or in a small group to make notes in response to the posed questions, and then ideas can be shared as a class.

As a class, consider how the family and their friends' characters have been presented, so far, in *Mortified* and whether they are similar to or different from the students' own families and friends, or people they know.

Encourage students to write an entry in their journal explaining ways they are similar to Taylor and ways they are different from her.

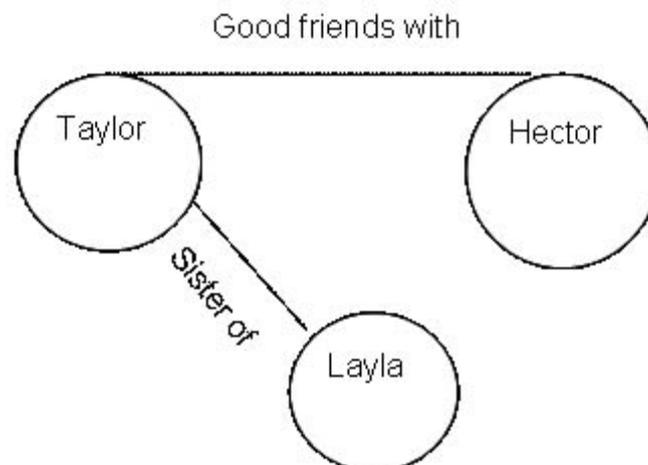
1.2 Exploring the First Episode

View *Mortified* Episode 1 and then, as a class, discuss students' responses to the questions posed prior to viewing.

After viewing Episode 1 create a list of the characters so far:

1. Taylor
2. Father (Don)
3. Mother (Glenda)
4. Mother's cousin (Mystic Marj)
5. Sister (Layla)
6. Brittany (girl next door)
7. Hector (best friend)
8. Leon (boy Taylor likes)

Have students work in the pairs or small groups again to create a socio-gram showing relationships or connections between characters. While students are working encourage sharing across pairs or groups to develop a rich understanding of relationships between characters in the series.



View Episode 1 again. Prompt students to list examples where they believe Taylor feels mortified for example:

1. When her mother calls her over the loudspeaker in the shopping mall
2. When her mother reminds her about a fitting for her training bra over the loudspeaker
3. Being reminded that her father owns 'Underpant King'
4. Seeing her father dressed absurdly
5. When her father blows the car horn frenetically outside Brittany's house
6. Watching her parents attempts to come up with an act for the talent quest
7. When her parents perform their 'act' in the talent show.

Assist individual students to use these examples of Taylor feeling mortified to create a Mortified scale and plot profile. Use Worksheet 1: Mortified Scale to create this in the form of a line graph. List key plot events on the horizontal axis. Indicate high and low mortification points for Taylor in the plot with a rating scale on the vertical axis.

Encourage students to examine one another's plot profiles to compare similarities and differences in the rating of events.

As a class discuss what students have learned about:

- Taylor?
- Taylor's feelings about herself?
- Taylor's perceptions about her family?

List students' ideas about the theme/s or messages explored in Episode 1. Ask students to predict whether some or all of the themes or messages might carry through the whole series.

As a class, discuss the way/s in which Taylor changed her thinking during Episode 1. What were the key moments or events that led her to change her thinking?

Ask students to think about and to discuss the way/s in which Taylor is similar to and different from them.

As a class, discuss the changes Taylor would like to make to her parents. Ask students:

- Do you think it's possible to have perfect parents? Why or why not?
- Do all kids have moments when they are embarrassed by their parents?
- Do parents have moments when they are embarrassed by their children?
- Is it possible to have perfect kids?

View the scene where Taylor is waiting for Hector to arrive with her DNA result.

Clip 2: Episode 1, *DNA Results*

As a class, discuss what Taylor is hoping for in this scene. What does she want? Why does she want it? What do you think about Taylor's predicament? How would you feel if you were Taylor?

As a class, discuss the techniques used by the filmmakers to create meanings in this scene. Identify the techniques such as editing, camera shots and music and have students recall examples from the clip.

Play the clip again with students focusing closely on how these techniques have been used to create meaning in this sequence. Use the pause function to analyse examples of interest in detail. Consider:

- camera shots
- editing
- music and soundtrack
- dialogue

Introduce the concept of 'intertextuality' which is the shaping of a text's meaning by other texts. It can also refer to an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another. The meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes" imparted to the writer and reader by other texts.

Show examples through pictures books of how John Brack's 'Five o'clock Collins St' has been 'borrowed' by Shaun Tan (*The Lost Thing*), Tohby Riddle (*The Singing Hat*) and by cartoonists e.g.; Julia Gillard as Barmaid in Brack's 'The Bar'

Compare this with the scene at the end of the concert. Screen DVD clip 3:

Clip 3: Episode 1: *The Reaction*

Discuss the different reactions in this final scene. How do Taylor's friends and the audience respond to Taylor's parents 'act'? How does Taylor feel? Has she changed her mind about her parents at all? Has Taylor discovered anything about herself?

What do you think the filmmaker wants you to feel about this? Replay this clip and look closely at the camera and editing techniques the filmmakers have used to show Taylor thinking one thing while the audience and Leon in particular thinks something else. In pairs, list the filmmaking techniques used in this scene to achieve this. Share, compare and discuss.

1.3 What is a Family?

As a class, brainstorm ideas about what makes a family. Accept all ideas and record them on the board or on butcher paper. Students could consult print and online resources for definitions.

Provide students with clay or plasticine to create models of the members of their families. Have students each use a small box, such as a shoe-box, to create a background set for their family members. Refer back to the settings used for Taylor's family in *Mortified*. What does this setting say about Taylor and her family? Encourage students to think of a setting that reflects an enjoyable time for their family.

Display the family models and family genealogical trees and discuss the many types of families that exist amongst class members. Add any new information to the earlier

brainstorm.

Discuss with class why Taylor is dissatisfied with her family. What do you think of Taylor's family? Discuss the concept of a 'perfect family'. Is there such a thing? What might Taylor like her perfect family to be? Is this realistic? Why? Why not?

Discuss the concept of a stereotypical TV family. Have students brainstorm all the TV families they can think of. In small groups, students can sort the families, identifying any that might fit the definition of the 'perfect' family. Encourage groups to share ideas and discuss the similarities and differences between these choices. Highlight the ways in which these fictional families are different to real life families. Discuss why filmmakers choose to present families like this.

Assist each student to develop a storyboard sequence of 5 - 6 frames that shows their idea of an 'ideal' TV family using their clay or plasticine figures as characters. Encourage them to break the stereotypes and to come up with some more realistic representations.

If possible, provide opportunities for each student to use their characters to create a Claymation (*Claymation is used to describe clay animation which is one form of **stop motion** animation; specifically, it is the form where each animated piece, either character or background, is "deformable", i.e. a malleable substance, usually plasticine clay*). Ask students to detail the story on their storyboard.

View 'Wallace and Grommit' to see how this is done; also 'Shaun the Sheep'

Ask students to each write a journal entry exploring reasons why families are different and why they are important.